

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PORT O 00959 081657Z
ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 550
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, EFIS, TD, VE

SUBJECT: TRINIDAD-VENEZUELAN FISHING TALKS FAIL TO MAKE
PROGRESS

1. THE FOURTH ROUND IN THE CURRENT SERIES OF NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN TRINIDAD AND VENEZUELA, THIS TIME DEALING PRIMARILY WITH A FISHING AGREEMENT, ENDED INCONCLUSIVELY ON MARCH 25. THE ONLY ACKNOWLEDGED RESULT OF THE NEGOTIATIONS WAS AN AGREEMENT TO CONTINUE DISCUSSIONS IN NEW YORK DURING THE RESUMED LAW OF THE SEA NEGOTIATIONS. THE DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED BY THE NEGOTIATORS AND THE INTRACTABILITY OF THE PROBLEMS WERE RECOGNIZED BY PRIME MINISTER ERIC WILLIAMS IN A SPEECH TO A SPECIAL CONVENTION OF THE PEOPLE'S NATIONAL MOVEMENT ON APRIL 3. DR. WILLIAMS DISMISSED LIGHTLY THE FAILURE OF THE NEGOTIATORS TO REACH AN AGREEMENT AND SAID THAT AS LONG AS PEOPLE FISHED IN THE GULF OF PARIA, THERE WOULD BE PROBLEMS.

2. THE NEGOTIATING TEAMS RECONVENED IN PORT OF SPAIN ON MARCH 22 AFTER A NINE-MONTH BREAK TO ATTEMPT TO REACH A DEFINITE AGREEMENT ON FISHING WHICH WOULD REDUCE THE NUMBER OF INCIDENTS BETWEEN TRINIDADIAN FISHERMEN AND THE VENEZUELAN COAST GUARD. THE T&T TEAM WAS LED BY
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DR. LENNOX BALLAH, ACTING PERMANENT SECRETARY IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, WHILE DR. ISIDRO MORALES PAUL OF THE VENEZUELAN FOREIGN MINISTRY WAS HEAD OF THE VENEZUELAN DELEGATION. THE MAJOR STUMBLING BLOCK PREVENTING AGREEMENT WAS A DISAGREEMENT ON THE SPECIFICATION OF THE SIZE OF MESH FOR SHRIMP NETS. THE VENEZUELAN HAVE INSISTED ON A SIX-CENTIMETER MESH NET WHICH TRINI-

DADIAN FISHERMEN CONSIDER TO BE MUCH TOO LARGE FOR THE
KIND OF SHRIMP THEY CATCH IN THE GULF OF PARIA AND OFF
THE VENEZUELAN COAST.

3. PRIOR TO AND IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE TALKS,
INCIDENTS TOOK PLACE BETWEEN TRINIDADIAN FISHERMEN AND
THE VENEZUELAN COAST GUARD IN WHICH TRINIDADIAN FISHERMEN
AND BOATS WERE TAKEN INTO CUSTODY BY THE VENEZUELAN
AUTHORITIES AND THEN RELEASED SOME TIME LATER. THE
INCIDENTS AGAIN UNDERSCORED THE CONTINUING PROBLEMS AND
THE LACK OF PROGRESS THE TWO GOVERNMENTS HAVE MADE IN
RESOLVING IT.
RICH

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